1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

more exclusively pastoral, and more nomadic, than at the present time, and that the dwindling of their herds may partly explain their persistent aggressiveness. 233

III

Although cattle have many uses they are chiefly useful for the milk they provide. Milk and millet (sorghum) are the staple foods of the Nuer. In some parts of their country, especially among the Lou, the millet supply seldom lasts the whole year, and when it is exhausted people are dependent on milk and fish. At such times a family may be sustained by the milk of a single cow. In all parts the millet crop is uncertain and more or less severe famines are frequent, during which people rely on fish, wild roots, fruits, and seeds, but mainly on the milk of their herds. Even when millet is plentiful it is seldom eaten alone, for without milk, whey, or liquid cheese, Nuer find it stodgy, unpalatable, and, especially for children, indigestible. They regard milk as essential for children, believing that they cannot be well and happy without it, and the needs of children are always the first to be satisfied even if, as happens in times of privation, their elders have to deny themselves. In Nuer eyes the happiest state is that in which a family possesses several lactating cows, for then the children are well-nourished and there is a surplus that can be devoted to cheese-making and to assisting kinsmen and entertaining guests. A household can generally obtain milk for its little children because a kinsman will lend them a lactating cow, or give them part of its milk, if they do not possess one. This kinship obligation is acknowledged by all and is generously fulfilled, because it is recognized that the needs of children are the concern of neighbours and relatives, and not of the parents alone. Occasionally, however, after an epidemic or, to a lesser degree, after two or three youths of the group have married, an entire hamlet, or even a whole village may experience scarcity. Sometimes, also, shortage is caused by a tendency for the cows of a village to cease lactating at about the same time. 234 262 [353]

Nuer value their cows according to the amount of milk they give and they know the merits of each in this respect. The calves of a good milch cow are more highly prized than the 234

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

●234 calves of a cow that gives little milk. A cow is never to them just a cow, but is always a good cow or a bad cow, and a Nuer who is owed a cow will not accept in payment of his debt one that does not meet with his approval. If you ask a Nuer in a cattle camp which are the best and worst cows in the herd he can tell you at once. In judging their points he pays little attention to those aesthetic qualities which please him in an ox, especially fatness, colour, and shape of horns, but he selects those which indicate a good milch cow: a broad loose back, prominent haunch bones, large milk-veins, and a much-wrinkled milk-bag. In judging the age of a cow he notes the depth of the trenches which run on either side of its rump towards the tail, the number and sharpness of its teeth, the firmness of its gait, and the number of rings on its horns. Nuer cows have the familiar angular and thin-fleshed characteristics of dairy stock.

Milking is performed twice daily by women, girls, and uninitiated boys. Men are forbidden to milk cows unless, as on journeys or war expeditions, there are no women or boys present. The milker squats by the cow and milks a single teat at a time into the narrow mouth of a bottle-necked gourd balanced on her thighs (see Plates III and V). She milks with thumb and first finger but, the other fingers being closed, the teat is to some extent pressed against the whole hand. It is both a squeezing and a pulling motion. The gourd is kept in position by the downward stroke of the hands which press it against the thighs. When a pot, or a gourd with a wider mouth, is used it is held between the knees and the milker squeezes two teats at a time. Occasionally one sees two girls milking a cow, one at either side. If a cow is restless a man may hold it still by putting his hand in its mouth and gripping its muzzle, and if it kicks, a noose is placed round its hind legs and they are pulled together (see Plate III). I was told that sometimes they ring the nose of a cow that is habitually restless during milking.

The process of milking is as follows. The calf is loosened and with its tethering-cord round its neck runs at once to its dam and begins violently butting her udder. This starts the flow of milk, and Nuer hold that if the calf were not first to suck the cow would hold up its milk. They do not pat the udder with the hand unless the calf is dead, for this is considered bad for the cow. When the calf has sucked a little it is dragged away, resisting stubbornly, and tethered to its dam's peg, where it rubs against her forelegs and she licks it. The girl now milks the first milking, known as

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

PLATE III

234

Milking a ruthless cow (Lou)

[Face 22]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

234 the *wic*. When the teats become soft and empty the calf is again loosened and the process is repeated. The second milking is called *tip indit*, the greater *tip*. As a rule there are only two milkings, but if it is a very good milch cow at the height of her lactation period the calf may once more be loosened and a third milking, called *tip intot*, the lesser *tip*, be taken. When the girl has finished milking she wipes her thighs and the milk-gourd with the cow's tail and loosens the calf to finish off what milk is left. The first milking takes longer time and produces more milk than the second, and the second more than the third. The morning yield is greater than the evening yield.

A series of measurements suggest that four to five pints a day may be regarded as a general average for Nuer cows during their lactation period, which lasts, on an average, about seven months. It must be remembered, however, that this is an estimate of the yield for human consumption. The calf gets its share before, during, and after the milking. It is possible, moreover, that, as Nuer declare, some cows hold up their milk for their calves, since the calves often suck for several minutes after milking before their dams refuse them by kicking them or moving so that they cannot reach their udders. Sometimes a small boy drags the calf away and milks the udders himself, licking the milk off his hands, or shares the teats with the calf, but as a rule the calf gets the remainder of the milk. The total yield may, therefore, be as high as seven to nine pints a day and it appears to be far richer than milk given by English cows. It is not surprising that the yield is small, because Nuer cows receive no artificial feeding, succulent pasturage is often difficult to obtain, and they have to endure great hardship. It must, moreover, be emphasized that whereas English dairy farmers require only milk, Nuer herdsmen require milk and also wish to preserve every calf. Human needs have to be subordinated to the needs of the calves, which are the first consideration if the herd is to be perpetuated.

Milk is consumed in various ways. Fresh milk is drunk, especially by children, and is also consumed with millet-porridge. Fresh milk
262 is chiefly drunk by adults in the heat of the dry season when a refreshing draught is most appreciated and food is scarce. Some milk is put aside, where it soon, very rapidly in hot weather, sours and thickens, in which condition it is relished. Nuer like to have

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

turns the curds, *lieth in bor*, into solid deep yellow cheese, *lieth in car*. After boiling for a time the liquid is poured into a gourd and the oil on top is removed, to be used as a flavouring for porridge. The cheese is suspended in a net from the roof of a hut in a round gourd, a piece of the shell of which has been cut out so that cords run through it and it acts as a sliding lid (see Fig. 2), and, if air is excluded by a coating of cattle dung, it will keep in good condition for months. Milk may thus be stored in the form of cheese. It is eaten with porridge and is also used for anointing the body.

Sheep and goats are also milked in the mornings, but little importance is attached to their yield, which is drunk by small children and not used for dairy work. The woman milks and the kids and lambs finish what is left in the udders. As they run with their dams at pasture an evening milking is not taken; but during the day hungry herdboys often squeeze the udders and lick the milk off their hands.

Some points that arise from an account of milking and dairy-work deserve emphasis. (1) The present number and distribution of cattle do not permit the Nuer to lead an entirely pastoral life as they would like to do, and possibly did at one time. On a generous estimate the average daily yield to the byre is probably no more than twelve pints, or one and a half pints per person. A mixed economy is, therefore, necessary. (2) Furthermore the fluctuation in household resources, due to epidemics and transmission of bride-wealth, is further accentuated by the organic character of the staple diet, for cows only produce milk for a certain period after calving and the yield is not constant. It follows that a single family is not a self-sufficient unit, as far as milk is concerned, for it cannot always ensure an adequate supply. Therefore, since milk is considered essential, the economic unit must be larger than the simple family group. (3) Environmental conditions, as well as need for cereal food to supplement their milk diet, prevent Nuer from being entirely nomadic, but milk food enables them to lead a roving life for part of the year and gives them mobility and elusiveness, as their history shows and as has been recently demonstrated in the Government campaign against them. Milk requires neither storage nor transport, being daily renewed, but, on the other hand, involves a straight dependence on water and vegetation which not only permits, but compels, a wandering

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

life. Such a life nurtures the qualities of the shepherd—courage, love of fighting, and contempt of hunger and hardship—rather than shapes the industrious character of the peasant.

IV

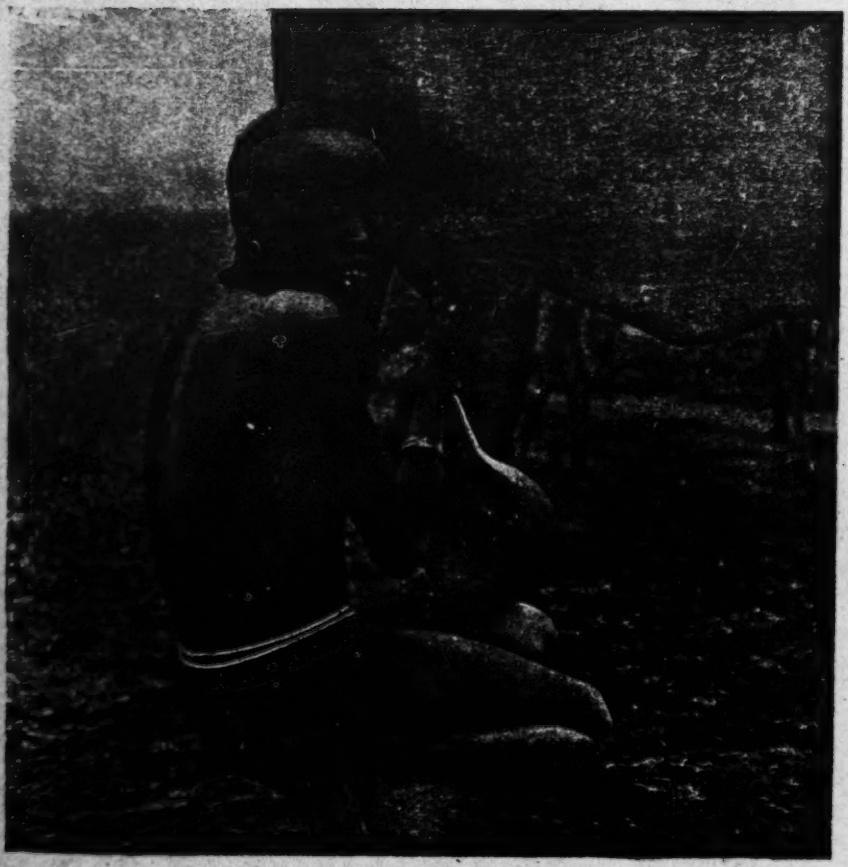
Nuer are also interested in their cattle for meat, boiled and roasted. They do not raise herds for slaughter, but sheep and oxen are frequently sacrificed at ceremonies. There are always ghosts and spirits in whose honour a sacrifice would at any time be appropriate, and such sacrifices are generally long overdue, so that there does not lack a proper excuse for a feast when people desire one. Fertile cows are sacrificed in mortuary rites, but, otherwise, only barren females are killed. At sacrifices most people are interested more in the festal than the religious character of the rites. Sometimes, as at marriage ceremonies, the people who perform the ritual are different from those who eat the meat, while at other ceremonies there is a general scramble for the carcass. Desire for meat is shown without shame on these occasions, and Nuer recognize that some men sacrifice without due cause. In some years it is a custom in the rains for young men to join together at a homestead with the purpose of slaughtering oxen and gorging themselves with meat. Except on such occasions, however, people ought not to kill an ox solely for food—it being even thought that the ox may curse them—and they only do so in severe famine. The Lou, who are rich in cattle, have a reputation, of which they are rather ashamed, for killing oxen for meat. Nevertheless, nowhere in Nuerland are cattle ordinarily slaughtered for food, and a man would never kill even a sheep or goat merely on the grounds that he desired meat. On occasions of minor importance sheep or goats are sacrificed rather than oxen, as they are less valuable.

Any animal which dies a natural death is eaten. Even when a youth's favourite ox dies he must be persuaded to partake of its flesh, and it is said that were he to refuse his spear might avenge the insult by cutting his foot or hand on some future occasion. Nuer are very fond of meat, and declare that on the death of a cow, 'The eyes and the heart are sad, but the teeth and the stomach are glad.' 'A man's stomach prays to God, independently of his mind, for such gifts.'

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

PLATE V

234



Girl milking (Lou)

[Face p. 36]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

often received some such reply as: 'Oh well, such is our custom. We have cattle.'

I wish to emphasize, in conclusion, the following points: (1) that Nuer cultivate only enough grain for it to be one element in their food-supply and not enough to live on it alone; (2) that with their present climate and technology considerable increase in horticulture would be unprofitable; and (3) that the dominance of the pastoral value over horticultural interests is in accord with oecological relations which favour cattle husbandry at the expense of horticulture. Nuer values and oecological relations, therefore, combine to maintain the bias towards cattle husbandry, in spite of rinderpest having rendered it a more precarious occupation than hitherto.

IX

It has been mentioned that Nuer must have a mixed economy in the given oecological relations because no one source of food is sufficient to keep them alive, and that the dominant food-producing activity at each season is determined by the oecological cycle. The different elements of diet, therefore, have an oecologically determined relation to one another and these relations can be roughly plotted.

Milk foods, millet in the form of porridge and beer, a little maize, fish, and meat, are the main items of Nuer diet. Milk is a staple food all the year round, though cows probably tend to give a smaller yield towards the end of the rains owing to insufficiency of pasturage, and it is said that there is a tendency for them to calve in numbers after the first harvest and therefore to cease lactating a few weeks earlier—if this is correct it is possibly due to the hot weather in February and March bringing the cows on heat. This seasonal tendency and the respective contributions of cattle and millet to Nuer food-supply are brought out in a story in which Cow and Millet have a dispute. Cow says that Millet is a person of no importance and that it is her milk that keeps people alive throughout the year, while in time of famine they can eat her flesh and live. Millet replies that Cow's claims are doubtless just, but that when she is ripe the children are glad, for they chew the sweet stems and rub out the grain between their hands and eat it,

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

water or rank vegetation, and as they can graze on the tender shoots. But when the dry season advances pasture becomes scarcer but cattle can graze again over the shoots. Eventually, however, they have to fall back on marsh grasses, especially in a dry year when such grasses of the plains as *dut cieng nath* may fail (it is said *ce tör* or *ce juac tör*). Nuer then make for rivers, swamps, lagoons, and deep marshy depressions where they can always find enough vegetation to keep the cattle alive. The chief marsh grasses are *poon* (*Onyza Barthi A. cheval*), *giëk*, *buogh*, and *kuth yang*. Nuer say that no grasses give more milk than these if the cows can obtain them in abundance.

Cattle also eat a number of plants and these are a useful addition to their diet. A good number of such plants, however, grow in cultivations and are therefore not accessible to the cattle, but some spring up in old garden sites and in the neighbourhood of habitations. Nevertheless cattle are grass grazers and it is mainly sheep and goats which graze on plants, and they eat also the leaves of young trees. Goats will eat almost anything but sheep are daintier feeders and will not touch some of the bitter plants and shrubs that goats devour. The plants eaten by sheep or goats, or by both, generally grow in old cultivations or on old homestead and camp sites. Some of those recorded are *Cak*, 'milk,' so-called because it oozes out a thick white juice when cut, *tiltil* (*Boerhaaira repens L.*) another plant called *tiltil* (*Indigofera Sp.*), *Wangrial* (*Justicia matammensis* (*Schwenf*) *oliv.*), *när yiauwa* (*Emilia sagittata DC*), *mut ngai*, 'spear of the francolin' (*schleria foliosa A. Rich.*), *wöör* (*Portulaca Quadrifida L.*), *kutkakdeet* (*Glycine Borianii Bak*), *tac* (*Ipomoea reptans Poir*), *pac* (*Urochloa s:.*), *nyiök indit pin*, *tiecdong* (*cyperus rotundus L.*), *tiec*, *belagak gordet*, *kër jaakoah* ('crow's pumpkins'), *thil in cöt*, etc., etc.

XI.

Besides having to adapt themselves to conditions of water supply and vegetation Nuer have to adjust themselves to conditions of insect-life which is an ever-present obstacle to cattle husbandry in their country. The cattle get no rest from stinging flies and ticks from

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

morn till nightfall and in the rainy season they are menaced by mosquitos as soon as the sun sets.

When the rains commence the cattle are taken back to the permanent villages and, as mosquitos become numerous, they are milked towards sunset and then at once tethered in the byres, the doors being closed after them. In the centre of each byre a huge fire of dried dung sends out clouds of smoke so dense that it is impossible for a European to remain there for several minutes. One cannot even see the cattle. One can only hear their movements as they chew the cud (*nyök*) and change their position. The smoke and heat are so oppressive that I have often wondered how either Nuer or their cattle survive the atmosphere night after night. Young men sleep on a platform above the fire and if the smoke becomes less dense one of them descends to stir up the fire and pile on more dung, for as soon as the smoke beings to clear—it escapes through the thatched roof—mosquitos enter. When the cattle are brought into the kraal before sunrise they are sleepy. I suppose that they have not had a very restful night in the stifling atmosphere of the byres. Nuer realize that the heat and smoke of the byres are bad for the cattle but they consider that mosquitos are worse. At the end of the rainy season and at the commencement of the dry season they leave the cattle outside till they go to bed themselves. Then they have to shut them in the byres because they would inevitably be devoured by lions if left all night unguarded in the kraals. They do not make up the fires so high at this time of the year for after the first millet harvest has been reaped mosquitos are far less numerous near the villages, since there is now no standing water and the grasses have been close-cropped on the ridges by the flocks and herds. Later those who still remain in the villages often erect windscreens in the kraals and spend the night with the cattle outside.

The worst months for mosquitos are July, August and September, when there is surface water and when the millet crop is well grown, for swarms of mosquitos shelter beneath the broad leaves of the millet during the heat of the day. As soon as the sun sets one hears Nuer slapping mosquitoes on their bodies as they sit by the kraal

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

221 Hunger is partly responsible for the low pulse of life at this season. As has been explained, Nuer cultivate little and in most districts, especially in Lou country, they have to husband their grain if it is not to be exhausted long before the new harvest has ripened. They leave most of the grain in their wet season villages for seed and to support themselves during the hungry weeks that last from sowing to harvest time. They do not carry much millet to the camps so that they have to use it sparingly, though, if the camps are only a day or two away from the villages, women will sometimes return to get further supplies from the village granaries. When the dry season is well advanced the cows often cannot obtain sufficient pasturage of a nourishing quality and give little milk. Those Nuer who camp at the edge of inland pools and lagoons can supplement their diet with fish, but on the Sobat we only had what few fish boys could spear in the shallows and the yield of harpooning from our single canoe. From time to time members of our camp managed to kill wild beasts: gazelle, cob, tiang and giraffe. Otherwise our meat supply was limited to an occasional ox or cow which died and to blood from the necks of cows.

805 233 Camp life is regulated by requirements of the cattle and Nuer speak of periods of the day by reference to pastoral tasks rather than to the course of the sun, *e.g.*, they say that they will do something at the time of milking, or after the cattle are driven to pasture, or when the calves return to camp. The camp time-table varies little from day to day. It is approximately as follows:—

512 234

A.M.

6.00 Everybody rises.
6.45 The cows are milked.
8.00 The cattle are driven to pasture, the kraal is cleaned and the morning meal is served.
8.15 Goats and sheep are milked and taken to pasture.

P.M.

4.30 Calves, sheep and goats are brought back to camp.
5.00 Cows which have recently calved come running home.
5.30 The herd returns and the cows are milked.
7.30 The evening meal is served.

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

361 or dearth of pasturage, the people remain on their village sites or move only a short distance from them, they insist on making a camp nearby, for such is the ancient dry-season custom.

342 The windscreen (*geau*) does not seem to be used in Western Nuerland. In the camps I have seen there both sexes live in grass huts plastered with dung, the huts of married couples being rather larger than those occupied by youths or girls. The huts appear also to be more carefully constructed than in Eastern Nuerland. In
343 Nuer camps one sometimes sees a rough shelter (*geau deeni*) constructed of branches with grass, often the riverside *buor*, thrown on top to give shade for the young calves during the heat of the day. Otherwise they are taken into the huts or tethered beneath a tree.

233 In the front of the windscreens are tethered the cattle. When they are grazing the kraal is a circle studded with pegs and sprinkled with drying dung. When they come back in the evening they are tethered to these pegs. Adult cattle are placed in the centre of the kraal, the calves on the outside nearest to the windscreens where they are under the watchful eyes of their owners, and the sheep and goats in small clusters here and there between the adult cattle and the calves. Oxen of enormous size, with great spreading horns trained into artificial shapes, stand docile and lethargic, prominent among the other cattle. A man places his favourite ox in a line with the entrance to his windscreen so that he can see it without moving.

●234 883 Before and during milking youths display themselves in company with their favourite oxen. Boys lead the oxen round the camp and their young owners walk behind them brandishing their spears and leaping gracefully into the air, shouting and singing the while. This display is called *rau* and is one of the customs of dry season camps. It is not practised in wet season villages because a youth does not show off before his own family but when he has a large audience, including girls whose favours he wishes to win. Youths often continue to display themselves till the cattle are driven to pasture.

234 462 Milking starts between 6-30 and 7-00. If the morning is misty it may be delayed till slightly later. As men are forbidden to milk

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

they sit in their windscreens while the women and boys milk the cows. This task takes about half an hour and the cattle then remain for a while tethered to their pegs. Each household milks its own cows and if there are strong boys and girls they do most of the work, leaving the married women to cook and attend to their babies, but adult women milk troublesome cows which require experience and firm handling and if they have no adolescent sons and daughters have to milk all the cows of their household. 234● 462 512

Between 7-30 and 8-0 the cattle are taken to pasture. If some of the beasts are loosened before milking is finished they do not leave the herd but wait nearby the kraal till they are driven out with the herd. By this time the sun is high in the heavens. When there is good pasturage near the camp they may not be loosened till 9-0—10-0 o'clock because they will have plenty of time to eat their fill before sunset. Mr. Corfield tells me that they are generally taken to pasture at this late hour among the Eastern Jikany whose country is not so arid as that of the Lou. I gathered from statements of Western Nuer that in their country it is customary for the cattle to be loosened even later in the day. 233 512

No one gives an order for the cattle to be loosened but when all the cows have been milked someone begins to loosen his cattle and the others follow suit, the oxen being loosened last. The herdsmen for the day take them out of the kraal. Usually several men accompany the cattle for a short distance but some of these return to camp and only two or three men spend the day with them in the grazing grounds. Each household in turn provides a herdsman and the men who herded the cattle today arrange with others to herd them tomorrow. The adult occupants of each windscreen must take their turns as herdsmen. After being loosened, some beasts make at once for nearby water while others wait till they have reached their grazing grounds and drink there, for, about midday, the herdsmen accompany them to a pool. If water is near the cattle make their way to it, but if it is distant they have to be driven there. Herding is considered a hardship and is conducted by young adults. They have to keep a close watch over the cattle during the heat of the day in case they wander and

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

233 512 [533] they may have to defend them against carnivorous beasts and human raiders. Often they relieve the monotony and solitude by composing and chanting songs. Nuer say that most songs are invented in the grazing grounds. Herdsmen have a quick meal before leaving camp [264] and, except when there are plenty of *heglig* fruits in the early part of the dry season, they will not have another bite till after sunset. However hungry he might feel no herdsman would milk a cow.

512 462 •234 237 After the cattle have left camp the day is closed for the men, as far as routine cattle tasks are concerned, till they are brought back to the kraal in the evening; but women and boys continue their labours. Women milk the goats and sheep and prepare the morning meal. Boys spread out the cattle dung that has collected overnight so that it may dry in the sun and furnish fuel to replenish the household fires at night. They also smooth the part of the kraal occupied by their beasts by rubbing over the earth the nightly residue of ashes, urine, and dung. Boys assist in milking the goats and in taking the small calves to shade. They then take the larger calves and the [233] flocks to pasture. Older boys herd the calves and younger boys look after the flocks in the vicinity of the kraal. They spend most of the day playing games. If a small boy is hungry he catches a she-goat [857] and milks it, holding it by the horns with one hand while he pats its udder and squeezes its teats with the other hand from which he then licks the milk. Or he may suckle it. People do not object to small boys milking the goats they are herding. They are small and hungry and need all the food they can get to grow into strong men.

512 462 224 Not all the adult men have been idle while their womenfolk and the boys have been cleaning the kraal and milking. On most mornings parties of two and three leave camp at dawn with their dogs to pick up a gazelle or other small animal. They do not return to camp till after milking is finished, and those who set out at dawn to inspect their giraffe traps return about the same time. After the cattle have been loosened the men potter about for a couple of hours. Generally some of them are engaged in making utensils and ornaments or in dressing their hair.

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

Much attention is devoted to hair-dressing in the dry season. In the rains the hair is sometimes neglected though never for a long time unless a man is in mourning. Nuer hair is naturally crinkly and black but when treated with ashes of cattle dung mixed with wood ash it is oxidised and becomes straight and golden. A man takes a heap of ash from his wind-screen fire, mixes it with wood ash, and places them on his sleeping skin where he removes any lumps, leaving only fine ash. To make the ashes finer still he beats them with a mallet and shakes and taps the skin so that the ashes are spread over it and can be searched for foreign matter which is then extracted. When he is satisfied he divides the ashes into two heaps, one of which he mixes with water. The Eastern Nuer do not use urine for this purpose as the Dinka and, to a lesser extent, the Western Nuer do. The scalp is now massaged with the damp ashes. When this is finished the hair is gathered into a peak at the back or front of the head and the dry ashes are sprinkled on top. The head remains for two or three days in its ash plaster which is then removed and the hair is sprinkled with oil. Nuer hair freshly treated in this way has a golden tint and glistens in the sun. Young men spend many hours in their wind-screens, after the cattle have gone to pasture, preparing their hair in this way. 362

By about 10 o'clock most of the men are sleeping behind their windscreens, beneath trees, or, if the camp is near a wet season village, in byres. Only if game is sighted is there any male activity in the camp for an hour or two before noontide. The men grasp their spears and with their dogs sprint after the animal to encircle it and run it down. After the first rains all able-bodied men leave camp to search for giraffe-tracks and if they find the animals they pursue them till they are exhausted and overtaken and speared. Nuer sometimes chase giraffe all day long and their endurance will scarcely be believed till it is seen, being especially remarkable when we recollect that they are weakened by hunger at this time of the year. But at the height of the dry season it is useless to hunt giraffe as they are too fleet on hard ground. While the men are sleeping the women are engaged in churning last night's milk. 512 462 224 [234]

If there are cattle to be milked, the woman must milk them morning and evening. In the afternoon she must again go to the river to refill the water-jar. She usually stops to bathe if she comes from any distance.

Sometimes this work of getting the water-jars filled twice a day is not as merely routine as it sounds; it may be fraught with danger in this crocodile infested river. One afternoon about five o'clock, a huge crocodile was seen sunning itself on the river bank right in the path down which the women would come to get water between five and six o'clock.

The bank was steep, no one could possibly see the crocodile until he started down the slope. Then it would be practically impossible to get away until too late, because the woman would be burdened with her heavy water-jar, and that, together with the steep bank and her surprise at finding the crocodile there, would retard her escape.

But a missionary was passing in the launch and saw the crocodile. He realized its purpose, but not in time to shoot as he went by. But the launch quickly circled around again and slowly approached the path where the crocodile lay awaiting its prey. He shot the top of its head off; it gave one shudder and then never moved from its place. The Nuer in the launch wanted the meat, for crocodile tail in their estimation makes delicious steak. But one of the women missionaries in the launch objected seriously when the men wanted to cut off the crocodile's tail. She wanted to be sure it was dead, so that there would be no possible chance of any objections from the crocodile to the tail-amputation affair. The men did not seem to feel that a crocodile with the top of its head blown off would have much power to object to anything that might be done to it. But to appease feminine fears

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
FJ22 Nuer F I22

196 784 [834] [841] [234] and while she is suckling an infant, for a child born of union in these forbidden periods is a child of misfortune. A woman in her periods respects the milk of cows; she may only drink goat's milk at this time. Nuer also use the word *thek* to refer to the prohibition on men milking cows. Men respect the cows with regard to milking. Milking is done only by women and boys. It can happen, however, that on journeys there are no women or boys present, and in these circumstances men may milk the cows on condition that each gets another to milk his cows for him. I learnt in 1936 that a youth, Tot, who in 1931 had been a member of my household, had died as a result of having milked a cow at night in the *byre of his home and drunk the milk.*

196 776 784 One of the commonest uses of *thek* is, as we have seen, in reference to totems. A man respects his totem by refraining from harming it in any way (pp. 64 seq.). The respect is mutual and the totem should refrain from harming those who respect it. We have also noted earlier (p. 129) the respect relationship between twins and birds. The word is also used for the attitude of a man towards his fetish.

196 784 *Thek* has, therefore, in all its contexts of usage a sense of deference, constraint, modesty or shyness, or a mixture of these attitudes. It seems often to carry as part of its load of meaning a feeling of embarrassment which is entirely lacking in the ordinary behaviour of Nuer towards persons and nature. The behaviour associated with it is formalistic and includes always avoidance and abstention, though it will have been observed that these need not be absolute. A man does not in any way avoid his cows except with regard to (*he kwi*) milking them.[1]

The purpose and function of these respect relationships are

observes or honours (*luth*) the days of her indisposition. On the other hand, *thek* may be used to speak of a woman being in her periods, it being understood that what she respects are the cattle. The word can thus be used as a polite euphemism for 'to menstruate'.

[1] While a man does not respect a cow dedicated to a spirit, Dr. Smith tells me that he can be said to respect it with regard to milk and marriage. Only members of his family may drink its milk and it must not be used for marriage, unless in either case the spirit gives its consent. Dr. Lienhardt tells me that a man can also be said to respect such a cow with regard to urine, in that he does not use it for domestic purposes. As I was not aware of these particular usages of the word *thek* I can only record this information without discussing it. A breach of the prohibitions would certainly involve liability (pp. 39–40) but it would not be classed as *nueer*.